

Message Text

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LIMA FOR FAA ATTACHE RENE CARDONA

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SUBJECT: SECURITY IN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS IN BOLIVIA

REF: STATE 212490

1. EMBASSY ADVISING GOB OF USG CONCERN FOR AIRPORT SECURITY AND INTEREST IN GOB RATIFICATION OF HAGUE AND MONTREAL CONVENTIONS VIA DIPLOMATIC NOTE.

2. RE ASSESSMENT OF AIRPORT SECURITY IN EFFECT AS REQUESTED PARA 3 REFTEL, BOLIVIA MAINTAINS THREE (3) INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS - EL ALTO IN LA PAZ, EL TROMPILLO IN SANTA CRUZ AND THE AIRPORT AT TRINIDAD. BASED ON EXPERIENCE OF MISSION PERSONNEL AND DISCUSSIONS WITH FAA AND ICAO PERSONNEL ON ASSIGNMENT IN BOLIVIA, THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF SECURITY SITUATION AT THREE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS:

A. EL ALTO - SERVICES A RELATIVELY HEAVY FLOW OF INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, PANAMA, THE US AND EUROPE. BOTH THE TRANSIT LOUNGE AND CUSTOMS ARE ARE PHYSICALLY SEPARATED FROM THE REST OF THE AIRPORT FACILITIES,
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AND ENTRANCES ARE GUARDED BY FULLTIME POLICEMEN. ENTRY OF

NON-TRANSIT PERSONNEL TO THESE AREAS IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN (AND ENFORCED) DURING ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES. AT OTHER TIMES, HOWEVER, IT IS FAIRLY EASY TO GAIN ENTRY TO THESE AREAS WITH LITTLE OR NO CHECKS MADE FOR SECURITY PRECAUTIONS. ALSO, THE SYSTEM FOR CHECKING PASSENGERS AND BAGGAGE BEARS ONLY A CURSORY RESEMBLANCE TO SECURITY MEASURES TAKEN AT US AIRPORTS, AND UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL CAN EASILY ENTER THE AIRCRAFT LANDING STRIP ITSELF. A SECURITY INSPECTION OF EL ALTO WAS TO BE MADE BY REGIONAL FAA ATTACHE DURING RECENT VISIT, AND DEPARTMENT SHOULD REFER TO HIS REPORT.

B. EL TROMPILLO - IS THE RECENTLY OPENED INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN SANTA CRUZ, WHERE MOST NON-DOMESTIC FLIGHTS ARE TO AND FROM ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, PANAMA AND THE US. SECURITY IN TRANSIT AND CUSTOMS AREAS SERVICING INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS IS NEXT TO NON-EXISTENT. THERE IS A SEPARATE BAGGAGE HANDLING AREA FOR INTERNATIONAL PASSENGERS, BUT THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS ON ENTRY OF PERSONNEL. ALSO, THERE ARE EVEN FEWER AIRPORT SECURITY GUARDS IN EVIDENCE AT EL TROMPILLO THAN AT EL ALTO.

C. TRINIDAD - REPORTS FROM MISSION PERSONNEL INDICATE AIRPORT SECURITY IN TRINIDAD IS EVEN MORE LAX THAN AT OTHER TWO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS. THERE IS, HOWEVER, CONSIDERABLY LESS NON-DOMESTIC PASSENGER TRAFFIC THROUGH THIS PORT.
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